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THE RELATIVE CAPACITIES OF NATIONS.

It may be instructive and useful to glance at the present financial condition of the leading nations of Christendom, and to estimate their relative capacities of progress and prosperity.

Although such financial and commercial statistics as transpire to the public, from year to year, may not precisely measure, they at least suggest the approximate wealth of nations. But even in inferring their wealth from such statistics, no little caution is requisite, in order not to confound liabilities with assets, or indebtedness with sources of revenue. In estimating the property of an individual, it is pretty safe to go to the tax-book, and take the amount for which he is "rated." In his case, the amount of his taxes measures and represents his wealth. Even the sum that a man pays in interest on borrowed money, may frequently and safely be assumed as representing part of his available means; for it should denote an amount of producing capital, so invested as to yield him a profit, after paying the stipulated rate of interest. But neither of these estimates would be correct, when applied to the resources of nations. The amount of taxation does not represent the nation's wealth, but frequently, if not always, its poverty. The interest it annually pays on its debts, does not indicate or even suggest an amount of money borrowed and invested reproductively. It generally stands for a sum borrowed and squandered upon an enterprise that yields not a farthing of revenue to the treasury. Take, for instance, the national debt of Great Britain, which amounted to £764,541,295 before the commencement of the war with Russia. How little this almost immeasurable indebtedness represents of *reproductive* investment! We doubt if the Chancellor of the Exchequer could show that the investment which swallowed up these prodigious loans, yields him a sum equal to the tax he levies upon the single article of tea.

With these observations, designed to qualify their valuation, we give a few statistics bearing upon the financial condition of the leading nations of Christendom in 1854, or before several of them became involved in the expenditures of the war with Russia.

Nations.	Total Debt.	Ann. Charge of Debt.	Debt per Head.
Great Britain....	£764,541,295	£27,726,960	£27 6
France.....	242,943,906	15,860,136	6 16
United States....	9,369,887	870,053	0 8
Austria.....	162,376,980	6,681,917	4 8
Russia.....	124,857,409	4,650,145	1 17
Prussia.....	32,680,675	1,625,842	1 18
Spain.....	144,837,068	Not given.	9 13
Sardinia.....	22,873,046	1,848,946	4 12
Portugal.....	19,122,800	659,008	5 9
Belgium.....	26,145,214	1,460,194	5 19
Bavaria.....	14,117,000	Not given.	3 0
Holland.....	100,082,362	3,017,457	29 15
Saxony.....	6,417,228	294,902	3 0
Denmark.....	13,541,666	482,248	5 17

From the foregoing table it will be seen, that the debt-burden of Holland is heavier upon its population, *per capita*, than that of any other nation, amounting to £28 15s. for every man, woman, and child. Next in proportionate weight is that of Great Britain, which is equal to £27 6s. per head. The annual charge or interest of this debt is about £1, *per capita*, for the population of Great Britain, and 18s. for that of Holland. This represents

the burden of the past and its expenditures, imposed upon the shoulders of every inhabitant of those kingdoms. Taking the average of the last five years, it will be found that more than half of the entire revenue of Great Britain goes for the past in the shape of interest; leaving, of course, but half the financial capacity of the nation for the present and future. Undoubtedly England possesses more wealth than any other country in Christendom, and can sustain a larger amount of taxation. But this ability is not all available capacity for present or future exigencies or enterprises. The giant laden to half his strength, may not take upon his shoulders another burden which a common man might not bear. Strong and broad-shouldered as he is, we must only estimate that portion of his strength which is not already taxed to its utmost, in measuring his ability with that of a smaller but less burdened competitor. Thus, in estimating the relative capacities of Great Britain and the United States, we see that the latter have husbanded almost their entire wealth and strength for present and prospective exigencies. The whole burden which the past imposes upon them only weighs, if we may so say, about 8s. 6d. per head; while that of England weighs £27 6s. She is obliged to tax annually every man, woman, and child of her population to the amount of £1 for interest on her debt; while the United States have only to raise 6d., *per capita*, for interest. To make the comparison more easy of appreciation, let us assume that 6d. represents one pound avoirdupois. Then Great Britain has to carry, in the race, *forty pounds* per head, while the United States have only *one*, to weigh upon their speed.

We have seen to what extent the revenues of the principal nations of Christendom are mortgaged, as it were, to the *past*, or appropriated to the interest on their public debts. But these debts, vast as they are, do not represent all the burdens entailed by the past upon the present generation. They are nearly all the products and legacies of war, which, through the armed-peace system, imposes an additional load of great weight upon the people. In fact, the preparations for *future* wars cost several great nations nearly as much annually as they once expended in active conflict with hostile powers. Both these burdens are virtually the legacy of the past and its policy. It may be instructive to put them in the scale against the other annual expenditures of different governments. We hope none of our readers will object to the classification of these two great items, if we call the interest on these public debts a charge for wars past, and the annual cost of military armaments and expenditure for wars prospective. All the other expenses are put under the head of civil government. We subjoin these items as they may be found in the returns for 1854.

EXPENDITURES.

England.

Wars past.....	£27,726,961
Wars prospective.....	24,580,042
Civil government.....	7,639,189
Total.....	£59,946,192

France.

Wars past.....	£15,860,136
Wars prospective.....	17,740,007
Civil government.....	27,068,675
Total.....	£60,668,818

Austria.

Wars past.....	£6,681,917
Wars prospective.....	11,196,791
Civil government.....	11,517,354
Total.....	£29,396,062

United States.

Wars past	£870,053
Wars prospective.....	4,687,879
Civil government.....	5,070,870
Total.....	£10,628,802

Prussia.

Wars past.....	£1,625,842
Wars prospective.....	4,205,106
Civil government.....	10,367,562
Total.....	£16,198,510

Holland.

Wars past.....	£3,017,457
Wars prospective.....	1,337,916
Civil government.....	1,536,603
Total.....	£5,891,976

The foregoing statistics show what a large proportion of the revenues of the leading nations is swallowed up in expenditures for war, past and prospective. These two items absorbed £53,307,003 of the public income of Great Britain in 1854; while all the expenses involved in the civil government amounted to only £7,639,189. Thus the war-system devours, even in time of peace, *seven-eighths* of the revenue of a nation that professes to be the most civilized and Christian in the world! These two heads of war-expenditure cost France, in 1854, £33,600,143 of its entire revenue, which was £60,668,818; Austria, £17,878,708 out of 29,396,062; Prussia, £5,830,948 out of £16,198,510; Holland, £4,355,373 out of £5,891,976; and the United States £5,557,982 out of £10,628,802. Here are the six most commercial, wealthy, and enlightened nations of the earth, spending, in one year, £117,530,107 on wars past and prospective! As the ass in the Scripture crouched between two burdens, so the people of Christendom are bowing to the earth beneath these two dead weights, saddled upon their shoulders by the war-system. And, what seems to aggravate their misfortune, the burden grows heavier from year to year. With the exception of the United States, all the nations of the civilized world, instead of diminishing, seem to be increasing their public debts, and also their annual expenditures for military and naval armaments. Nearly every year, some new "*improvements*" in these arms and agencies are pressed upon governments, the adoption of which involves an additional outlay. Now steam must be applied to war ships, and a whole navy reconstructed or remodelled at immense cost. Now the *Minie rifle* and *Colt's revolver* must displace a hundred arsenals full of the old-fashioned "shooting irens," and saddle the people with a new bill of expense. Now a ship of 7,000 tons, carrying a Gibraltar armament of cannon, is launched, and a great nation glories in its capacity to run over

a common seventy-four, as if it were but a fishing smack. This to be the *ne plus ultra* of naval power. Nothing will ever go beyond this sea-giant of war. Before it has made its trial trip, the keel of a ship of 22,000 tons is laid, which, when constructed, would run down the great "*Napoleon*," or the "*Duke of Wellington*," as easily as either of them could sink a common frigate. Thus it goes in the eager race for naval or military superiority. The best-paid science and genius of the age are employed to stimulate the costly competition, by inventing "improvements," or applying "new principles."

Where, when, and how is all this to end? Is this ruinous policy to be pushed until all the leading nations of Christendom shall break down under its weight? It must work to this end, unless timely and effective measures be adopted to arrest the evil. It is proposed, by one or more of the parties in the diplomatic conference now sitting in Paris, that a great Peace Congress of all the European governments shall be held to discuss and adjust the moot questions of that continent. No subject of more vital importance could come before such a Congress of Nations, than some practical plan for putting an end to this ruinous armed-peace system, which is dragging them into the abyss of bankruptcy. They have reached almost the brink of the precipice by proportionate and simultaneous increase of war-armaments. The only way of escape is to retrace their steps; that is, by proportionate and simultaneous dis-armament. In such a Congress, it should be as easy to do this as to *neutralize* the Black Sea, or to limit the number of war-ships in its waters. No nation of Christendom would change its position, or lose any of its relative strength by this arrangement. "If from equals you take equals, the remainders will be equals," is clear enough; and it is equally clear, that if from unequals you take equals, the original inequality will not be effected by an iota either way. To reduce simultaneously the naval armaments of Christendom by so many guns per hundred, and its standing armies by so many men per thousand, would leave all nations in the same relative force as at the present moment. Can any intelligent and candid mind see any other way of extricating those nations from the bog in which they are floundering? Can any impartial man suggest an arrangement more important to their well-being than such a dis-armament?

E. B.

THE RIGHT WAY.

We add a few more specimens from this work on Peace, published by the American Tract Society.

III. Another and plausible objection to the right way is, that *its practice would only subject us to get greater injuries*.

Whether this is true or not, the fact that it is our duty sufficiently answers, this, as indeed it does every objection. We have no right to make the real or supposed results of a divine obligation the criterion of our obedience. If the way which we have presented is the *right* way, it is our plain duty to follow it, *whatever be the consequences*. The objection, however, has not the sanction of either reason or revelation. Obedience to the gospel must necessarily lessen strife, and "turn away wrath." He who controls his own passions, acquires thereby a mastery over those of his adversary, and by his very forbearance disarms the other's enmity, and recalls him to reflection. He does indeed outwardly yield, in refraining from physical resistance, yet he subdues him by a moral power which is far more effective than that of the strongest arm, or the deadliest weapon.